REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 1-4 have been cancelled and claims 5-8 have been added. Thus, claims 5-8 are now active in the application. Reexamination and reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

In items 1 and 2 on pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action, claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by US 6,448,307 (Medoff 307). This rejection is respectfully traversed in part and is believed clearly inapplicable to the claims as now presented, for the following reasons.

Claims 1-4 have now been cancelled and replaced with claims 5-8 which have been drafted to clarify the nature of the present invention and clearly define over the prior art.

Claim 5 sets forth a method of manufacturing a granulated body for absorbing excrement of animals, comprising: pulverizing dry bamboo to obtain dry bamboo fibers 1; pulverizing paper to obtain paper pulp fibers 2; mixing the dry bamboo fibers 1 with the paper pulp fibers 2 while adding moisture 4b so that the moisture 4b is absorbed by the dry bamboo fibers 1, to thereby form a resultant mixture; granulating the resultant mixture to form a wet granulated body 3; and creating externally-opening pores 7c in the body 3 by blowing hot air to the body 3 such that the hot air penetrates the body 3 and causes moisture 4b in the body 3 to transpire outwardly from the body 3 so as to form transpiring paths that constitute the externally-opening pores 7c (see Fig. 2C).

Claim 6 sets forth a similar method to that of claim 5, but specifies the dry bamboo fibers as a chief material, and does not specify the inclusion of paper pulp fibers.

Thus, according to the inventive method of each of claims 5 and 6, the absorbent nature of the bamboo fibers is utilized to absorb the moisture 4b, and then hot air is blown to the body 3 such that the hot air penetrates the body 3, causing the moisture 4b in the body 3 to transpire so as to exit the body 3. In this process, the transpiring paths 7a, 7b, 7c are created, thereby forming the externally-opening pores 7c. These externally-opening pores provide the body 3 with its porous structure that enables advantageously high absorption of the animal excrement.

In contrast to the present invention as recited in claims 5 and 6, although the Medoff 307 patent mentions the use of bamboo materials to form compositions in bulk form or in the form of

articles, the Medoff 307 patent does not disclose or suggest the specifically recited method steps of claims 5 and 6, including the step of creating externally-opening pores in the body by blowing hot air to the body such that the hot air penetrates the body and causes moisture in the body to transpire outwardly from the body so as to form transpiring paths that constitute the externally-opening pores. In the Office Action, the Examiner asserted that the Medoff 307 patent discloses "blowing hot air to the wet granulated body (col. 5, lines 35-39) to cause the moisture absorbed in the dry bamboo fibers to be transpired outward through the wet granulated body by the hot air to thereby cause transpiring paths to be formed in the wet granulated body to obtain a porous structure in the dry bamboo fibers in the wet granulated body." This assertion by the Examiner is respectfully traversed. The disclosure at column 5, lines 35-39 of the Medoff 307 patent states only that:

> *"for certain applications, drying of the fibers is useful. Prior to combination with matrix materials, the texturized fiber can be stored in sealed bags (i.e., to reduce the amount of subsequent drying required), and then dried at approximately 105 °C. for 4-18 hours (until the moisture content is less than about 0.5%) immediately before use."*

However, this disclosure in the Medoff 307 patent does not suggest the specifically recited step of creating externally-opening pores, and also does not suggest blowing of hot air to the body so that the hot air penetrates the body. Furthermore, there is no mention whatsoever of the formation of transpiring paths that constitute externally-opening pores. In fact, not only are externally-opening pores not suggested in the Medoff 307 patent, but it is not suggested in the patent that the composition or articles formed thereby is desired to be of a porous structure.

Thus, in view of this clear distinction between the specifically-recited method of claims 5 and 6 and the Medoff 307 patent, it is believed to be apparent that claims 5 and 6 are not anticipated by the Medoff 307 patent. Furthermore, the distinction is such that there is no teaching or suggestion in the Medoff 307 patent or in the other references of record which would have motivated a person of ordinary skill in the art to modify the Medoff 307 patent or to make any combination of the references of record in such a manner as to result in or otherwise render obvious the present

invention of claims 5 and 6. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 5 and 6 are clearly allowable over the prior art of record.

Next, claim 7 sets forth a method of manufacturing a granulated body for absorbing excrement of animals, comprising: pulverizing dry bamboo to obtain dry bamboo fibers 1; pulverizing paper to obtain paper pulp fibers 2; providing the dry bamboo fibers 1 and the paper pulp fibers 2 as chief materials; combining a water-sensitive coagulant powder together with the dry bamboo fibers 1 and the paper pulp fibers 2 and admixing the water-sensitive coagulant powder, the dry bamboo fibers and the paper pulp fibers in a non-hydraulic state, to thereby form a resultant mixture; and compression-molding (see Fig. 5A) the resultant mixture to form a granulated body (see Fig. 5B) having a fixed shape with a porous structure.

Claim 8 sets forth a method similar to that recited in claim 7, but does not specify the pulverizing of paper to obtain paper pulp fibers nor the inclusion of the paper pulp fibers as a chief material.

Thus, each of claims 7 and 8 is directed to a method of manufacturing a granulated body for absorbing excrement of animals, wherein dry bamboo fibers (or dry bamboo fibers and paper pulp fibers) and a water-sensitive coagulant powder are admixed in a non-hydraulic state to form a resultant mixture, and then the resultant mixture is compression-molded to form a granulated body having a fixed shape with a porous structure.

In contrast to the present inventive method of claims 7 and 8, the Medoff 307 patent does not disclose or suggest a manufacturing method wherein dry bamboo fibers are admixed with a water-sensitive coagulant powder in a non-hydraulic state, and then the resultant mixture is compression-molded to form a granulated body having a fixed shape with a porous structure.

In the Office Action, the Examiner asserted that the Medoff 307 patent discloses "admixing the resultant in a non-hydraulic state (col. 6, line 41); and compression-molding the resultant to form a granulated body having a fixed shape (col. 6, lines 41-60, col. 7, lines 8-17), 25-28)." However, contrary to this assertion by the Examiner, the disclosure at column 6, lines 41-60 is <u>not</u> that of admixing fibers in a non-hydraulic state, and then compression-molding the resultant. Rather, although lines 45 and 46 of column 6 of the Medoff 307 patent do describe the placing of a

compound in a compression mold, the compound placed in the compression mold is described (at column 6, lines 40-43) as undergoing "mixing until the fibers are well wetted and the material has the consistency of modeling clay." (underlining added). The compounds used in such compression molding example of the Medoff 307 patent are referred to as bulk molding compounds (BMCs) that are made by combining a resin and chopped fibers in a dough mixer. These BMC compounds are described as being used to make many electrical parts and other applications including microwave dishes, table tops and electrical insulator boxes. Thus, not only does the Medoff 307 patent fail to disclose or suggest the admixing of fibers and a water-sensitive coagulant powder in a non-hydraulic state, and then compression-molding the resultant mixture, but it also clearly fails to disclose or suggest that such compression-molding forms a granulated body having a fixed shape with a porous structure. Further, there is no suggestion in the Medoff 307 patent that this compression-molding example of the Medoff 307 patent utilizes a water-sensitive coagulant powder to be admixed with dry fibers.

Accordingly, for these reasons, it is apparent that claims 7 and 8 are not anticipated by the Medoff 307 patent. Furthermore, the above-described differences between the present inventive method and the Medoff 307 patent are such that a person having ordinary skill in the art would clearly not have been motivated to modify the Medoff 307 patent or to make any combination of the references of record in such a manner as to result in or otherwise render obvious the present invention of claims 7 and 8. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claims 7 and 8 are clearly allowable over the prior art of record.

For the above reasons, it is submitted that the application is now clearly in condition for allowance, and an early notice thereof is earnestly solicited.

If, after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner feels there are any issues remaining which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned by telephone in order to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Shotaro MOCHIZUKI

By: 

Charles R. Watts
Registration No. 33,142
Attorney for Applicant

CRW/abm
Washington, D.C. 20006-1021
Telephone (202) 721-8200
Facsimile (202) 721-8250
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